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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that while organizational research includes a diverse array of naturalistic approaches, a gap exists in the organizational literature that can only be filled by the ethnography of communication (EC). The paper proposes that, instead of using speech to do qualitative research, speech itself should be studied as the topic of interest, thus providing a fresh approach to organizational communication research along with practical potential for reducing misunderstandings and alleviating organizational conflict. Defining the ethnography of communication as the study of communicative conduct, the paper states that it is an approach to culture which has only recently been applied to the study of organizations. The paper explores the following: (1) the ethnography of communication as a field of study; (2) how organizational ethnographies of communication (OECs) differ from other naturalistic, interpretive studies of organizations; and (3) the unique contributions of OECs to organizational communication research and to management. Three pertinent studies are identified and then analyzed in the paper--those undertaken by L. A. Baxter (1993), by D. Carbaugh (1988), and by M. R. Huspek (1986). The studies reviewed in the paper illustrate some of the specific benefits available to the organizations examined in the studies; the EC approach also has obvious application in multinational companies where interaction between subsidiaries located in different countries may prove bewildering. Contains 47 references and 14 notes, a table, and an explanatory appendix with a table. (NKA)

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Ethnography of Communication:

A Unique Contribution to Organizational Research

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Abstract

While organizational research includes a diverse array of naturalistic approaches, a gap exists in the organizational literature that can only be filled by the ethnography of communication (EC). Many scholars doing qualitative research use speech to study their topic of interest; EC proposes that speech itself be studied as the topic of interest. EC provides a fresh approach to organizational communication research along with practical potential for reducing misunderstandings and alleviating organizational conflict.

Key words: ethnography of communication, organizational communication, naturalistic research

Ethnography of Communication:

A Unique Contribution to Organizational Research

> . . . [W]hat is cultural in an organization? And how does the cultural relate to the communicative in organizational life?
>
> - Donal Carbaugh (1986, p. 88)

Corporate managers and organizational scholars alike are beginning to ask these questions with increasing frequency. What constitutes organizational culture and how it is worked out in verbal interaction are concerns which have been pursued by both academics and practitioners because of the significant implications for understanding and improving organizational functioning. The import of the topic has captured the attention of numerous individuals, from Deal & Kennedy (1982) to Alvesson & Berg (1992), who have taken the study of organizational culture in intriguingly diverse directions.

According to Alvesson (1993), there are two broad answers to the question of why studies of organizational cultures are important and what makes these studies worthwhile. The perception of the purpose and function of culture is pivotal in distinguishing these two approaches. Alvesson (1993) notes:

> [t]he first views organizational culture as a means of promoting more effective managerial action, whereas the second views culture as a point of entry for a broader understanding of and critical reflection upon organizational life and work. (p. 6)

Not all organizational scholars will wholeheartedly agree with either of these approaches, often referred to as functionalist and critical approaches, and Alvesson therefore offers a third, middle of the road, approach which he describes as "the development of knowledge or interpretation without any clear purpose. . . . [U]nderstanding is viewed as an end in itself rather than being tied to either technical problem-solving or emancipation" (p. 7). This last perspective is often referred to as an interpretive approach. Ethnographies of communication (ECs) offer one way of exploring organizational culture from an interpretive perspective which contributes to understanding while also offering pragmatic benefits to the organization itself.[1]

The ethnography of communication is the study of communicative conduct, as it is accomplished among speech community members.[2] It is an approach to culture which has gained currency over the past thirty years in anthropology departments, but has only recently been applied to the study of organizations. EC highlights concepts not addressed through other naturalistic studies by focusing specifically on speech and by attending to the functions of language as it is used in daily interaction. While relatively few organizational ethnographies of communication (OECs) have been completed to date, they promise to fill a gap in organizational research and offer a unique contribution to the exploration of organizational culture.

For example, the EC framework provides a structured and organized means of exploring communicative conduct across different organizations or across different subgroups within a single organization. Consider the tense situations prevalent among

union shops in which management and hourly employees find themselves lined up opposite each other, toe to the line. Mediators may be brought in, negotiations take place, but in some situations the substance and content of the disagreement does not seem to be the only factor hindering progress. As Baxter's OEC points out, situations exist where though two organizational groups speak the same language, they yet have very different meanings for certain words and may be using language in different ways. The two groups are, in one sense, communicating from different cultures. The ethnography of communication provides the researcher a method for identifying and articulating the various "sub-languages" within an organization and furthers progress towards the resolution of these complex issues.

OECs can also offer clarification in less antagonistic situations. For instance, upper management is often concerned with communicating economic and business considerations to other functional groups within an organization (D. Cady, personal communication, 1992; M. Anderson, personal communication, June 3, 1995) yet simple informational meetings and explanations do not seem to provide adequate understanding of the concerns for both groups. Why is it that members of different organizational subgroups may all be speaking the same language and yet they fail to understand the substance or subtleties of the message communicated? These questions may be answered in part through ethnographies of communication.

Additionally, OECs can offer a new approach to cross-cultural communication research. Consider the question of multinational companies with diverse operations

throughout the world. Does each local manufacturing site have its own local speech code or is there a single speech code in use throughout the entire corporation? What implications does this have for communication among the various sites and between each site and the home office? What about trade agreements -- if parties are working from different speech codes, what implications does this have for the negotiations themselves in addition to the understanding of the agreements negotiated?

The following paper explores these issues and others by responding to several questions. First, what is the ethnography of communication as a field of study, and how does it function as a methodological framework? An initial explanation of the key concepts, theory related considerations and methodology of the ethnography of communication provides an introduction to the field of EC and an explanation of the theoretical foundation undergirding OEC research. Second, how do OECs differ from other naturalistic, interpretive studies of organizations? Seven defining criteria which together provide a frame for identifying OECs provide an outline f. the second section of the paper. Each criterion is introduced and illustrated with a description of a naturalistic organizational study which fails to meet the particular criterion. Third, what are the unique contributions of OECs to organizational communication research and to management? The three OECs identified for this paper include Baxter (1993), Carbaugh (1988) and Huspek (1986). A brief description of each study, followed by a comparative analysis of all three is presented to illustrate the range of organizational issues which have been addressed through OECs.[3] While some of the unique contributions of OECs will be

illustrated through the comparative analysis, the final section of the paper will further elaborate the specific benefits of the OEC approach for both organizational scholars and business practitioners.

Overview of EC

EC is a relatively new and distinctly unique approach to the investigation of culture. It pursues not language itself, but the interaction between language and social life. It involves a perception of non-obvious elements of communicative conduct and simultaneously requires both an outsider's distance and an insider's discernment. The EC approach necessitates being able to set one's self apart from the situation and view it from a new perspective (especially in explorations of familiar, close-to-home communities such as organizations within one's own ethnic culture). As a result, understanding OECs and their contribution to the field of organizational communication requires a familiarity with the key concepts, theoretical concerns and methodological framework of the ethnography of communication..

Key Concepts

The ethnography of communication was initiated by Dell Hymes in 1962; by 1986, over 200 studies had been generated in response to Hymes' call for research (Philipsen & Carbaugh, 1986). Hymes (1962) describes the field as "concerned with the situations and uses, the patterns and functions, of speaking as an activity in its own right" (p. 17). Addressing himself initially to linguists and anthropologists, Hymes contrasted the study of speech, language in use with the previous linguistic focus on language

itself, its underlying structures and rules. In organizational studies, the contrast is not so much between the structure of language and language in use, but between the use of speech as evidence of other topics and the study of speech itself, its own uses and patterns. Hymes introduced the idea that the speech activity of a community is a subject worthy of study in its own right and outlined an approach to investigate this subject: the ethnography of communication.

Bauman and Sherzer (1975) highlight three aspects of the ethnography of communication with the assertion, "its subject matter is speaking, the use of language in the conduct of social life" (p. 96, their emphasis). First, as noted above, EC emphasizes that speaking deserves study in and of itself; it offers more than simply the means to investigate other topics of interest.

Second, Bauman and Sherzer's statement foregrounds the use or function which language serves. Hymes proposed that the uses to which speech is put will differ from one community to another and that the functions of speech must be identified through observation. To illustrate the possibilities, Hymes (1974a) uses the phrase "I'm hungry" and notes that a beggar may use the phrase to obtain food, while a child may use identical words to avoid going to bed. The words are the same, the function they serve may be quite different.

Third, Bauman and Sherzer's statement points out the importance of examining speech "in the conduct of social life", that is, in context. The ethnography of

communication is committed to studying the speech of a community in situ, in the setting where it is naturally occurring.

A fourth key concept is that EC approaches a speech community not only from the empirical (outside) perspective, but pursues an understanding of the native speaker's (inside) perspective of speech as well. EC requires not only the recording of an individual's behavior, but also an account of that individual's interpretation and understanding of his or her behavior. [4]

Theoretical Concerns

Hymes' (1972) eventual aim is to develop a general theory relating language and social life. Speech serves different functions in different communities and it also serves different functions within the same community in different situations. In order to understand the role that speech plays and the functions it serves within a speech community, a theory which encompasses the diversity of speaking repertoires and the strategies for choosing among them is needed.

Hymes (1972) summarizes the aim of EC as follows:

> Its goal is to explain the meaning of language in human life, and not in the abstract, not in the superficial phrases one may encounter in essays and textbooks, but in the concrete, in actual human lives. To do that it must develop adequate modes of description and classification, to answer new questions and give familiar questions a novel focus. (p. 41)

The aim at the case study level is to understand the communicative competence that enables speakers in the community to execute and interpret speech. Describing the ways of speaking of various communities and developing a taxonomy of these ways of speaking is not a theory in and of itself, yet it is through the comparison of numerous studies which detail different speech patterns and functions that the universal aspects of the interaction between language and social life will be discovered.

Methodological Framework

Developing adequate descriptions of the interplay between verbal means and their social meanings requires noticing the relationships between various aspects of speech; for this enterprise, "some initial heuristic schema are needed" (Hymes, 1972, p. 52). These schema are provided in the framework which forms the foundation of the methodological approach to producing ethnographies of communication. Hymes provides a sequence of concepts which help ethnographers analyze individual speech systems and identify the forms and functions of speech.

The first term, and one of the primary units of analysis for EC, is speech community, defined by Hymes as, "a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety" (Hymes, 1972, p. 54). To be part of the same speech community, two individuals must share not only the same grammatical rules of the language itself, they must also share an understanding of the appropriate social norms in various situations.

These "rules for conduct" involve a knowledge (often unconscious) of the expected norms and patterns associated with speaking. In most organizations, for example, certain topics will be inappropriate in certain situations. Telling a sexually explicit joke in an executive board meeting of mixed gender is not likely to meet with overwhelming approval. Understanding the rules of speaking is just as essential as understanding the language itself in performing as a competent member of a speech community.[5] One way of identifying rules of speech in an organization is to note when they are violated. A change or shift in any of the components of speaking, defined below, may also indicate the presence of a rule.

Other important concepts are the speech situation, the speech event and the speech act. These terms form a hierarchy of progressively more focused locations of interaction. Speech situation, the broadest of the terms, refers to situations which are associated with speech such as ceremonies, banquets and so on. Although different rules for speaking may be operative at different times within a speech situation, speech events refer to activities which are "directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech" (Hymes, 1972, p. 56). The speech event is the activity (for example, a conversation or a formal introduction) in which rules for speaking are operative.

Speech acts are the minimal terms of speech events and are related to the functions that words may serve, independent of grammatical structure. For example, an utterance which has the form of a polite question may, in fact, be a command if it is made by a superior to a subordinate (Hymes, 1972).[6] These terms serve to distinguish between

different levels of rule governance in descriptions of a community's speech system. This general system, the whole range of rule governed behavior, is referred to as a way of speaking.

Speech styles have been defined by Hymes (1974) as "the root sense of a way or mode of doing something" (p. 434) and involve "qualitative judgments of appropriateness" (Hymes, 1972, p. 57). Style involves two different features or elements: "referential" features and "social-stylistic" features; both features work together to create meaning in social settings. Referential features in one language may simultaneously be social-stylistic features in another language, but both features will be differently expressed within a single language. For example, in English, 'h' said with little aspiration or with much aspiration has the same referential meaning. Thus, a stylistic difference is available between a lightly aspirated 'h' and a heavily aspirated 'h' in the phrase "I'm hungry." Referential features communicate the content or semantic meaning of a word or statement filling designative or predicative roles by naming the things that are spoken of and stating things about them. Social-stylistic features, on the other hand, play characterizing or qualifying roles and can modify the things that are spoken of and indicate how statements about them should be taken (Hymes, 1974b).

Components of speech and rules of speaking are the points in Hymes' framework where methodology becomes explicit. As a practical aid to developing a description of a speech community's ways of speaking, Hymes offers sixteen speech components which can be specifically observed and noted. Thus, part of the methodology for explicating

ways of speaking involves a detailed observation of the components of speech acts. Hymes arranged the sixteen components of speech into the mnemonic device SPEAKING; a summary of the sixteen components (numbered) set in the mnemonic frame is adapted from Eastman (1990, p. 159) and shown below:

Setting(1) and scene(2)

Participants: speaker (3); addresser(4); hearer(5); addressee(6)

Ends: goals(7) and outcomes(8)

Act Sequence: the order of message form(9) and message content(10)

Key(11): tone, manner, spirit (for instance, mocking or serious, light or heavy)

Instrumentalities: channels(12) and forms(13) of speech (written, spoken, mutually intelligible, pig Latin, and others)

Norms of interpretation(14) and interaction(15): for instance: Are certain things taboo? May interruptions occur? Can only women speak?

Genres(16): Is the speech a poem, myth, letter, advertisement, conversation, or other?

The components of speech, as identified above, form an "etic" grid which directs the researcher's attention to various elements of the speech event or situation which might otherwise go unnoticed. The overall methodology for developing descriptions of language and social life and the relationships between the various terms may be summarized as follows:

Speech Components	comprise	Speech Acts	which are part of	Speech Events	located in	Speech Situations.	
These Elements	combined with	Rules of Speaking	and	Speech Styles	describe the	Ways of Speaking	in a Speech Community.

The key concepts, theoretical concerns and methodological framework of EC, presented above, not only provide an overview of EC as a field of study, but also begin to demonstrate the singular role of EC within the field of organizational research. The following section will further elaborate this unique approach to organizational studies by defining the criteria by which ECs may be identified and illustrating the points at which other qualitative organizational studies fail to meet these criteria.

Criteria for Selection of ECs

Although experience varies from one organization to another, most organizational members who take time to think about how work is actually accomplished, are likely to agree with Karl Weick's (1987) assessment. He notes: "[i]nterpersonal communication is the essence of organization because it creates structures that then affect what else gets said and done and by whom" (p. 97, emphasis added). Verbal interaction is the most frequent means by which individuals communicate intention, coordinate action, evaluate the past and plan for the future. Given the predominance of interactive exchange in our organizational lives, it comes as no surprise that much of the organizational literature, especially that of a qualitative, naturalistic character, uses what people say as a way of investigating and understanding organizational life.

The ethnography of communication also examines speech in its investigation of the cultural worlds of organizing, but it explores speaking in a unique and distinctive way -- setting itself apart from other forms of qualitative research. In the following section, I propose seven criteria which uniquely define and identify OECs[7]. The value in articulating these criteria is not to use them as a measuring stick against which studies would be examined before they were labeled OECs. Rather, the purpose is to illustrate how OECs are different from most other naturalistic work in organizations and to begin to explore the distinctive contribution of OECs to organizational research.

The next section briefly introduces the seven EC criteria while simultaneously situating OECs in the larger context of organizational communication research through a series of examples. Each criteria is briefly introduced and followed with a specific exemplar of organizational research that fails to meet the specific criterion. Contrasting OECs with other naturalistic studies will highlight not only the differences between the various approaches, but will also begin to clarify some of the advantages of the EC approach to organizational studies.

Illustrated OEC Criteria

C1. OECs focus on speech itself as worthy of study.

Perhaps the most obvious, yet also the most overlooked aspect of OECs is that an ethnography *of speaking* takes, as its object, speech itself. As noted above, most qualitative research uses speech to explore the topic of interest, EC explores speech as the

topic of interest. Smith and Eisenberg (1987), like many qualitative scholars, treat speech more as a means to an end, than as a subject worthy itself, of study.

Smith and Eisenberg analyze conflict at "the happiest place on earth" (Disneyland) using an interpretive methodology which they term root-metaphor analysis. They suggest that root metaphors can be used to identify the differing world views which motivate deep seated, second order conflict and argue that a shift in root metaphors from "family" to "drama" provides evidence of the significantly different world-views of Disney management versus Disney employees. Data collection methods, consistent with many qualitative studies, involved primarily in-depth interviews.

This study shares several commonalties with OECs; the authors are interested in employees' viewpoints, they are concerned with what the spoken word reveals about world view, and they "share a concern for the meanings and interpretations organizational members attach to events" (p. 368). In one way, Smith and Eisenberg's work seems to focus on speech itself -- it investigates the way employees use a particular trope and deciphers the world-view and beliefs motivating this usage. On closer examination, however, one finds that the work does not focus on speech, but on conflict; employee speech is the tool used to understand conflict. The transcribed interviews are examined for metaphors which illuminate the world views motivating the conflict; they are not examined with an eye toward the patterns of speech itself.

Much qualitative research uses speech in pursuit of previously determined topics of interest such as conflict, concertive control, exceptionally successful companies etc.

OECs concentrate first on employee speech and let the patterns and functions of that speech reveal relevant topics. Noticing and identifying the patterns and functions of speech, however, is not an obvious task, especially when the language itself and norms of interaction are familiar to the researcher. A special framework for observation, as shown with the next case, forms the foundational difference between organizational ethnographies and organizational ethnographies of communication.

C2. OECs explicitly credit an ethnography of communication framework and/or use the precepts of the ethnography of communication.

This criterion directly parallels the three criteria used by Philipsen and Carbaugh (1986) in their bibliography of EC fieldwork. A normal and immediate tendency for both individuals and researchers is to focus on the content of spoken words instead of noticing the patterns and functions of speech. Training in a framework such as the ethnography of communication is needed to become sensitive to and aware of the subtle meanings of speech which are usually hidden behind the more obvious means.

Barker's (1993) work is, by his own claim, ethnographic. As such, it provides an opportunity for the explication of the perhaps subtle distinction between an ethnography which uses speech and an ethnography of speaking. The second OEC criterion, requiring the use of the EC framework and/or precepts, implies that a special knowledge and training is necessary in order for an organizational ethnography to be an OEC. Without this framework, Barker's work, while ethnographic, is not an ethnography of communication.

Barker provides an account of the transition from hierarchical, bureaucratic control to the concertive control of self-managing work teams in a small manufacturing company. Using typical ethnographic methods of participant observation and in-depth interviews, Barker explores the development of concertive control through the identification and explanation of three transitional phases experienced by a group as it shifts from a supervised to a self-managing work team.

Barker's results, in terms of the phases he identifies, provide insight into the focus of his observations and the range of his interests. The first phase, initially characterized by chaos and confusion, eventually evidenced a metamorphosis into consolidation and value consensus as the work team began to take personal responsibility for production. An influx of new workers into each team gave rise to the second phase during which the teams transformed their value consensus into normative rules which could be easily understood and followed by new employees. In the third and final phase, the work teams stabilized and while the rules became as formalized as the rules under the previous bureaucratic control, the center of authority remained with the team members instead of a supervisor.

Throughout this study, Barker uses the speech of his informants as the foundation for his inferences; he addresses rules, premises, and norms, and discusses the influence of team-members' talk on peers. These qualities, along with the methodology of participant observation and in-depth interviews, can easily be ascribed to OECs. Thus, the difference between ethnographies and ethnographies of communication lies, not in the methodology

for collecting data or even in the data itself, but in the background, focus and goal of the researcher and in the interpretation of the data. Without utilizing EC precepts or the EC framework, particular patterns and functions of speech itself are difficult to notice. Thus, the rules and norms discussed by Barker are behavioral norms, not norms of interaction.

Barker's ethnographic approach offers valuable insights into the evolution of an organization's control system from bureaucratic to concertive control; an EC approach of this same organization and phenomenon would highlight different interactive phenomena and answer different questions. For instance, if one thinks of the organization as a speech community where certain norms and rules of interaction are assumed, additional questions become relevant such as: are there rules of speaking which unobtrusively facilitate the transition from hierarchical to concertive control? Are there values and attitudes subtly evident in the speech of organizational members which support or hinder such an organizational transformation? Like Eisenberg with conflict, Barker uses the talk of employees to gain insight into participative control, investigating the talk itself through EC would provide additional understanding.

C3. OECs aim to understand the cultural system through an analysis of the patterns, functions and meanings of speech.

Clearly, EC is not the only methodological frame which focuses on speech itself; other methods include: discourse analysis, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis etc. Among these approaches, EC distinguishes itself by focusing on the cultural system evidenced through talk in addition to focusing on speech itself. Philipsen (1992)

emphasizes that all communicative conduct is influenced by and created through culture, where culture is defined as a system of particular symbols and meanings, premises and rules which are historically transmitted and socially constructed. EC offers a means of exploring the cultural system behind communicative conduct by examining the regular and recurring ways of using language and understanding it. A discussion of Brun-Cottan's (1990) work will clarify this claim.

Brun-Cottan (1990) practices what Moerman (1988) calls "Culturally contexted Conversation analysis" in order to "analyze the participants' methods of constructing, displaying, and accomplishing social order" (p. 278). She uses a combination of ethnography and conversation analysis to investigate "talk 'as work' " instead of merely "talk at work" (p. 279).

In this particular article, Brun-Cottan focuses on the video-taped interaction of a pilot with Operations personnel in a mid-sized American airline. Through a detailed analysis of a ten minute interaction, Brun-Cottan shows that operations personnel "monitor, evaluate, display and reroute information" (p. 280) and that other organizational members share expectations concerning these behaviors. She also shows that these expectations "appear in the detailed production of the talk-in-interaction" and that certain aspects of the technological resources available for this interaction are "consequential for the detailed formulation of the interaction" (p. 280). In sum, she uses conversation analysis as a means to identify significant employee concerns and to describe their work practices.

Brun-Cottan's work shares much in common with OECs: both examine speech itself within a particular organizational context; both provide a descriptive account of "talk-in-interaction," both use the ethnographic techniques of observation and open-ended questions. The dissimilarity lies in the researcher's goals and the level of analysis. As criterion three suggests, the aim of OECs is to understand the cultural system of an organization through an analysis of the patterns, functions and meanings of speech within the organization. While Brun-Cottan views speaking as part of the cultural system of an organization, her detailed analysis of a single conversation does not supply the necessary data for identifying patterns and functions of speech at the cultural level.

Brun-Cottan's analysis provides an in-depth, micro-description of a specific organizational interaction; it does not provide the data from which to derive rules of speaking and norms of interaction. OECs provide a more macro view of the cultural system through identifying the recurring forms of interaction, the uses of these forms and the understandings of these forms for participants. Hymes notes that communicative competence in includes not only an understanding of the language being used but also an understanding of the norms and rules of appropriate interaction. These norms and rules are a part of the cultural system which can better be explored through the broader study of EC.

C4. OECs recognize social-stylistic features of speech in addition to referential features.[8]

OECs pursue not only what the words of the participants mean in a dictionary sense, but also what they mean in terms of social conduct. For instance, completing a

verb with "-ing" instead of "-in'" has very definite social consequences for the lumber workers of Huspek's (1986) study and Huspek identifies and discusses these consequences as will be shown in the description of OECs. Much qualitative research, on the other hand, contents itself with the referential meanings of participant's speech. These scholars investigate what the words themselves say concerning the topic of interest; they do not address what the words do in the social context. DiSanza's (1993) work provides an example.

Using interviews, field notes, coding techniques and systematic analysis, DiSanza examines the strategic techniques used by bank management to motivate bank tellers to sell bank services. Three strategies are examined in terms of the amount of shared meaning required between management and tellers in order for the strategy to be effective in motivating teller sales. The first strategy, framing, involves characterizing activities which have negative associations with activities which connote positive images.[9] The second strategy, reinforcement messages, includes offering commission incentives for sales along with "an extravagant ritual called the Sale-A-Bration, an event designed to reward individual sales accomplishments" (p. 145). The third strategy, contractual agreement, was based on the belief that the organization has the right to determine rules of employment and that employees are obligated to obey these rules in return for pay.

DiSanza found that the meaning of the first two strategies, framing messages and reinforcement messages, was not shared between bank management and the tellers. For example, while bank management attempted to frame sales as service, bank tellers

continued to interpret offering additional services to customers as "push[ing]" (p. 145) services on customers who did not want them. As a result, these strategies were not effective in prompting tellers to sell bank services while the third strategy, contractual agreement, was successful, because meanings were shared between management and tellers.

This study, like the others, shares many of the characteristics of OECs. DiSanza is interested in the teller's perspective concerning the sales strategies, and he sets out to study shared meanings within the organization. He also uses ethnographic methods of participant observation and interviews. Yet, as with the other studies, the focus is on a topic of interest rather than on speech itself, its patterns, functions and uses. While DiSanza touches on many of the key components of speaking such as setting, participants, etc., he does not attend to these components as they relate to speaking, but only incidentally as they occur in his description. In addition, DiSanza utilizes only the referential aspects of talk, not the social-stylistic aspects. DiSanza attends primarily to what is said without consideration of the social implications, of the meaning carried not by the words themselves and their dictionary definition, but by the way they are used, the timing, the particular individuals involved at a particular time and place, etc..

The quotes chosen for inclusion in the article illustrate this point; only those statements which directly refer to the various bank strategies are included. These quotes are placed in the text of DiSanza's article so that they support his claims with their referential meaning. For example, in discussing the lack of shared meaning in the second

strategy (reward devices). DiSanza notes that it is partially the "differences between themselves and most of the award winners" (p. 146) that prevents the tellers from sharing the meaning intended by bank management. The quote that he uses to support this claim is from a woman who is comparing herself to one of the Sale-A-Bration winners:

> I'm a peak-time teller and she is a full-time person. It would be harder because she's there 40 hours as oppposed to [my] 20 hours so -- it would be like you could only get half of what she gets.

The referential content of these words clearly supports DiSanza's claim and illustrates how this particular teller perceives herself as different from the winner. DiSanza gives us no information, however, concerning the social-stylistic features of these words: how were they said?, what sort of tone? are they said in a different way with a different audience?. For example, a sarcastic inflection in the first sentence could convey an additional meaning to the sentence, especially if it was said in the presence of the full-time employee. OECs in general, attend more carefully than other qualitative studies to the social-stylistic aspects of speech with the result that the implications for social conduct are more likely to be recognized, investigated and understood. Noticing the tone and style of words is especially significant when the speech occurs in its natural setting, outside of the interview situation; attending to context in this setting is also important as the next criterion shows.

C5. OECs view speaking as part of a cultural system and examine speech within a culturally contexted frame.

Speaking, in the EC frame, cannot be separated from context; speech cannot be studied in a vacuum. Hymes (1974) makes this point explicitly, "one must take as context a community, or network of persons, investigating its communicative activities as a whole" (p. 4). Context is crucial to the understanding of patterns of speaking because the meaning of words may be contingent upon the participants, setting, topic, activity, and other components. For example, a statement made among friends during happy hour may carry a different tenor when made to a subordinate during a performance appraisal.

One consequence of the tendency to use speech versus study it is that the words spoken by informants are often lifted from their original setting without regard for their contextual and cultural import. In contrast, EC acknowledges that speech is intertwined with and derived from the local culture, and its meanings are intertwined with, and derived from the social and cultural surroundings.

ECs view speaking as "culture rich" meaning that the conceptualization of speaking provides "for the possibility that what speaking is, how it is organized, and what values it has to interlocutors, are matters of local definition" (Philipsen, 1992, p. 123).

Thus, the EC approach ensures that speech is viewed from a culturally contexted frame. Other approaches, like that of DiSanza with the bank tellers simply lift the quotes of their informants from their context without attending to the culturally contexted frame in which they were said. In many of these quotes, the reader knows nothing about the

context in which these particular words were said and instead, we are left with the words by themselves and have no choice other than attending to their referential content. In contrast, the EC approach recognizes that the meanings of linguistically identical statement s may differ significantly depending on the culturally contexted frame. "Speaking is," as Philipsen (1992) puts it, "inextricably speaking culturally" (p. 136).

C6. OECs are concerned with the perspective of the participants themselves.[10]

A full and complete understanding of the culture, according to EC, requires not only an outsider's etic observations, but also the knowledge of what the participants themselves are intending and experiencing in their interactions. While some qualitative scholars value and embrace these qualities, numerous others dismiss them. Starbuck's (1993) work evidences the distinctions between culturally contexted and emically sensitive OECs and much qualitative research which does not manifest these values.

Starbuck is interested in exceptionally successful firms such as Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz (Wachtell), a prosperous law firm located in New York city. In this study, Starbuck weaves story of Wachtell's success over the past thirty years using extensive quotes from partners, associates and staff at Wachtell as well as competitors and clients.[11]

The title of the work, "Keeping a butterfly and an elephant in a house of cards: the elements of exceptional success" metaphorically hints at his results. The exceptional success of Wachtell is due to the diverse, complex and ambiguous elements which contradict and oppose each other within a firm that is flitting from one success to another. More specifically, Starbuck refers to Wachtell as a house of cards because it "contains

many elements that fit together and reinforce each other" and because it is internally inconsistent and in conflict with itself; he reminds the reader that "[t]he cards forming a house stay up because they oppose each other" (p. 916). It is an elephant because it shows as many different sides of itself to different individuals as the elephant did to the blind men trying to describe it. Wachtell is a butterfly because, like butterflies, "Wachtell too is an elegant, colorful creation that flits from one success to another, and almost no one will be surprised if Wachtell metamorphoses into something more ordinary" (p. 917).

Starbuck strongly values the voice of those who are interviewed and uses direct quotations extensively throughout his work; this value is evidenced in numerous paragraphs which consist solely of a series of quotations from various diverse sources. Near the beginning of the article, Starbuck provides a table associating various sources with letter labels; for example, L refers to a document written by Martin Lipton, O refers to a lawyer from a competing firm, P refers to a partner at Wachtell. Later in the article, Starbuck offers whole paragraphs of direct quotations, including the one that follows which is under the heading <u>High Quality</u>:

> L: 'The Firm has not deviated from the basic premise on which it was founded twenty-five years ago -- if you do a superior job there will be more demand for you services than you can meet.' P: 'People come to us because they perceive us as very good lawyers.' . . . O: 'They can be a little slovenly.' P: 'I always knew that I could work as many hours as I wanted to do the best job I could and nobody

would ever second guess me.' P: 'I'm successful because I'm scared. All you have to do is screw up once or twice.'

By allowing his informants their unique voice, he encourages a seemingly emic perspective of the situation at Wachtell. His goal, however, is not to understand and preserve a "native view" of the situation, but rather to present his case through the words of his interviewees.

In contrast, OECs foreground participants' meanings and the native view by explicitly highlighting the unique personal force and function of the words for the participants themselves. The meaning of words, in a dictionary sense (which is the sense available given quotations by themselves, without the contextual setting) is only part of the concern of OECs. The more important part is the perspective and intended meaning of individuals as they uttered the words.

C7. OECs provide descriptive accounts of a speech community.

As described earlier, the ultimate goal of the ethnography of communication is to provide "[a] general theory of the interaction of language and social life" (Hymes, 1972, p. 39). The intent of EC is a description of the ways of speaking of a speech community, not the transformation of those ways or the emancipation of individuals. Thus, while the eventual goal is to generate universal understandings, the immediate goal of EC is to build a fund of specific descriptions. OECs contribute to the fund of studies by describing organizational speech communities in detail; theoretical synthesis, like critical evaluation, is not the immediate pursuit. An article by Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges

(1988) provides an example of the distinction between describing the speech code of a specific community and theorizing about the deployment of some elements of a speech code.

Like Brun-Cottan, Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges direct their attention to speech itself and its organization. However, where Brun-Cottan's culturally contexted conversation analysis examines speech at a very detailed level (more detailed than a typical OEC) and describes a single interaction in depth, Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges' (1988) work occurs at a broader level (more general than a typical OEC). Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges discuss, not the identification and description, but the deployment and function of a speech code evidenced in the intentional, managerial use of labels, metaphors, and platitudes.

Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges argue that linguistic devices, including labels, metaphors and platitudes, can be and often are intentionally crafted and used by organizational members to achieve several different goals: to encourage change (labels), to assist employees to understand change (metaphors) and to reduce the uncertainty associated with organizational change (platitudes). For example, labels, which seem innocent enough, can approve or stigmatize their referent by their mere application. Calling some organizational process "decentralization" in the current decade is synonymous with promoting that process as valued, beneficial and good because "decentralization" is, by definition, good. Referring to a group of people as "heretics," on

the other hand, can work powerfully to stigmatize the group regardless of individual eagerness to support organizational concerns.

This study focuses on speech itself and identifies specific terms and notions which are created and used in culturally sensitive ways (if they are to be successful). It recognizes speech as part of a cultural system and considers some of the patterns, functions and meanings of speech. Yet, while it shares these characteristics with OECs, it does not describe in specific detail the relationship between language and social life in a particular speech community. While Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges offer several examples, collected from various Swedish organizations, their work is not grounded in the particulars of a specific organization. While it is descriptive of the use of linguistic devices, it is not descriptive of a local and particular system of communicative conduct.

Although Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges' study does not fit the criteria of OECs because it is not grounded in and descriptive of a specific speech community, it offers an example of the type of coordinating synthesis which will be available once a foundational fund of OECs has been established. Once a number of organizational speech code descriptions have been developed and the universal qualities among them have been identified, a general theory concerning the deployment of those codes and their use by organizational members may potentially be developed.

A note concerning the value of critical ethnographic studies and the distinction between critical ethnography and OECs is appropriate here. Critical ethnography focuses on the ways in which organizational speech creates and maintains social structures and

power relations which may privilege some organizational members to the detriment of others. It rests on the assumption that power inequalities exist which harm certain organizational members. This assumption influences what the researcher subsequently identifies through organizational research; the problem, as Philipsen (1989) puts it, is that "the act of evaluation overpowers the act of inquiry" (p. 256). Thus, while critical ethnography is motivated by a desire for social change, EC is committed to pursuing understanding which is unimpeded by evaluation.

Synthesis of Contrastive Studies

In this section, seven distinctive criteria for recognizing OECs have been developed; and illustrated through examples from a broad base of organizational research. The goal was to locate OECs within the larger body of organizational communication research and to make explicit some of the significant differences between naturalistic, qualitative research in general and OECs in particular. The next sections clarify the benefits of OECs for organizational scholars and practitioners. A comparative analysis of three OECs reveals the range of approaches available with the EC framework and the final section summarizes some of the primary advantages of OECs to organizational scholars and practitioners alike.

Comparative Analysis of OECs

The most recent OEC is Baxter's study of two communication codes in an academic institution. Baxter (1993) sees her task not as describing one single organizational culture, but instead as "identifying an organization's multiple subcultures

and the deeply coded voices with which subculture members speak and hear" (p. 313). As a faculty member with a part-time appointment in the administrative office, Baxter had access as a participant observer to the communicative codes of both the faculty and the administration during their struggle to revise the governance codes of the institution.

Her goal was to "understand the actions of institutional members from their points of view by attending to the terms they used in discussing the governance" (p. 314). Over a two year period, she discovered two distinct communicative codes -- one used by faculty, the other by administration. The "code of collegiality" (Baxter's term), used by the faculty, viewed persons as unique individuals and valued interpersonal interaction as the best form of resolving differences and achieving consensus; faculty believed that written governance would be impersonal and indicate mistrust of individuals. Users of this code believed in the ability of people to "talk things through" (p. 317) and that resolving concerns through face to face interaction evidenced "trust and respect" (p. 317) for the individuals involved.

On the other side, administrators using the "professional management" (p. 317) code, saw individuals as fulfilling certain roles and positions and believed that fairness to all individuals required written codification of the rules of the institution. Users of this code believed that policies and procedures would be most fairly applied by "putting it in writing" (p. 313). Baxter notes that views of personhood embraced by "professional management" code users and "code of collegiality" (p. 320) users, respectively, closely resemble the codes of honor and dignity, described by Philipsen (1992).

Although both faculty and administration held the identical goal of "empowering" (p. 322) organizational members, the term "empowering" held different meanings for the different subcultures. Similarly, the concepts "person" and "professional" (p. 324) were terms used in both subcultures, but were understood in radically different ways in the two communities. Baxter's article describes the institutional conflict over governance as a "cross-cultural encounter in which the participants were speaking the same language but using different codes of meaning" (p. 324). She suggests that by bringing these different meanings to light in an OEC, organizational members will potentially recognize alternative responses to conflict. Baxter's work shows that acknowledging different codes of communication will not necessarily dissipate underlying controversies, but it will contribute to understanding between multiple subcultures and that understanding may lead to a reduction, if not a resolution, of the conflict.

While Baxter explores the tensions between subcultures, identified through diverse communicative codes, Carbaugh (1988) explores the tensions produced by a single communicative code among three perceived types of persons. At a television station located in the Northwest, Carbaugh identifies four recurring symbols in the speech of the station workers: "types of workers," "the building situation," "the communication problem" and "the product."

Utilizing employee terms, Carbaugh explores station workers' perceptions of the three people types (each type located in a different building): the "movers," the "secure," and the "paper movers." He then differentiates the meanings of these terms along five

dialectical dimensions: mobility/stability, work as life style/work as job, egoistic/content, visible/unseen and influential/yielding. The "movers" are considered mobile, visible, and influential and treat work as a lifestyle. The "secure," on the other hand, are considered stable and yielding and view work as a job. The "paper movers" are primarily described as unseen.

Building upon the tensions identified through the people and building terms, Carbaugh explores "the communication problem" through an explication of three emergent discursive themes: "the 'non-trickle down' of information, the difficulty in coordinating routine speech concerning daily tasks, and a problem in maintaining a minimal degree of 'casual communicat on'" (p. 224). The final symbol to be explored, "the product," forms what Carbaugh calls "the epitomizing symbol." (p. 226). In spite of all the tensions manifested through "the building situation" and "the communication problem," station workers are unified in a common goal by the mutual desire to create a good "product," that is, "what comes out on the screen" (p. 226). This epitomizing symbol provides the means for shared aspirations to be recognized and realized.

According to Carbaugh, one of the benefits derived through OECs is the ability to understand the meanings behind prominent terms of employee' speech which are opaque and complex to the uninitiated outsider. Further, OECs enable the generation of "cultural and social claims about communication" (p. 231), showing how systems of symbols both create and constitute the social fabric of employees' lives. Carbaugh further suggests that the three types of symbols: of persons, of speaking, and epitomizing

symbols, may provide a useful focus for future OECs. In summary, Carbaugh's work accomplishes several goals: it explicates employee speech from a cultural perspective, demonstrates the context-bound meaningfulness of that speech for the employees (along with the mystery of the speech for outsiders), and suggests ways of discovering such meanings in other settings and organizations.

Huspek, while employing the same theoretical framework, chose a different unit of analysis than Carbaugh or Baxter; instead of the cultural symbols of words and phrases, Huspek concentrates on word endings, that is, symbolic suffixes. He analyzes the use of the suffixes *-ing* versus *-in'* in the speech of lumber workers at a Northwestern industrial plant. Huspek addresses the problems of the "variable rule method accounting for linguistic variability" (p. 1) through an ethnography of communication approach, paying attention both to social context and to the patterns, functions and meanings of variant forms of speech.

Audio taped interviews with ten of the workers, combined with his own observations while employed at the plant, provide the data for the derivation of seven rules describing the various constraints (both linguistic and extra linguistic) which determine selection of either suffix.[12] Thus, Huspek illustrates how variability in the choice of suffix is influenced by a particular context. Further, suffix choice has radical implications for, indeed, inextricably determines, meaning. For example, Huspek notes how the sentence "He went jogging last night after work" evokes a completely different

attitude (one of respect or resentment) than the statement "He went joggin' last night after work" even when both statements refer to the same person and action (p. 158).

Huspek generates a hypothesis addressing the meanings, functions and social implications of various linguistic choices. Specifically, the low-prestige *-in'* variant functions both to create solidarity among the low-prestige group and also to perpetuate a sense of lower status among the workers themselves and by high-prestige others. In Huspek's words, the low-prestige variant "expresses the workers' lot and, in so doing, reproduces it as well" (p. 159). This work, like the other OECs takes an interpretive rather than a critical stance and remains primarily descriptive instead of evaluative. While Huspek's observations have implications concerning the societal norms which allow for and propagate the low-status lot of lumber-workers, the primary emphasis of this article is a description of the functions and meanings of speech and the role that linguistic choices play in the perception of social status.

In sum, each of these studies is concerned with the meanings of speech to the individual participants and pursues a descriptive, interpretive approach rather than an evaluative, critical one. Each study recognizes the stylistic aspects of speech in addition to referential aspects and views speaking as part of a cultural system manifesting itself in the patterns, functions, and meanings of speech. These commonalties differentiate OECs from other types of research. At the same time, these studies evidence a broad range of organizational settings, analytic approaches, methodologies and result formats; a significant amount of diversity exists within OECs.

The researchers in each of the studies used some combination of participant observation and interviewing techniques, but within this purview, the researcher role varied from that of a full-fledged member of dual speech communities to structured, audio taped interviews as an external researcher. In addition to the qualitative description present in all OECs, quantitative data was also used. Similarly, the boundaries of speech communities were characterized differently and the level of analysis varied from words and phrases to suffixes. Baxter identifies the various "god terms" and symbolic resources for different subcultures within one organization. Carbaugh, on the other hand, relies on the same symbolic sources to point out tensions between three "types of people" all sharing the same cultural terms. In Carbaugh's study, tension between the groups occurred not at the level of understanding (as in Baxter's case) but at the level of attitude toward universally understood differences between types of people.

Finally, depending on the intent, methodology and situation, the results of each OEC take on various formats. Baxter delineates two unique communicative codes, while Carbaugh identifies five dimensions of three people/building categories within one speech community. Huspek does not specifically address tensions between groups, but focuses instead on the variant linguistic choices and their implications within a single speech community.[13] See Table 1 for a comparative overview of the three OECs.

Insert Table 1 here

Contribution of OECs to Organizational Communication

Given the variety, richness and diversity of qualitative research in organizations, much of which uses and perhaps focuses upon the talk of organizational members, what are the unique benefits, advantages and values of the ethnography of communication to studying organizations and organizing processes? The field of organizational communication , from its beginning, has been motivated by pragmatic concerns as well as academic interests; the following section also encompasses both foci. The first part reviews the ways that OECs advance scholars' understanding of the organizing process by providing a new lens for exploring organizational concerns, by supplying a framework for cross-organizational comparison, and by addressing key concerns of organizational communication research. These theoretical issues will be followed by a discussion of the pragmatic benefits of the EC approach for organizational members and management.

OECs and Organizational Understanding

Karl Weick views theories as "tools of inquiry that direct, suggest and stimulate observation" (Weick, 1979, p. 108); new theories enable us to view familiar processes in novel ways. The theoretical framework of the ethnography of communication, with its focus on the patterns and functions of speaking itself, provides just such a novel approach to the study of organizations; OECs may reveal unique aspects of organizing which are not evident through other theoretical lenses. OECs help to make the everyday, taken-for-granted aspects of organizing strange so that they may be recognized. Huspek's ethnography of lumber yard workers' speech provides one example. The use of the low

status *-in'* instead of *-ing* serves not only to communicate a shared group membership in the lower status group, but also serves to perpetuate the low status assumptions of each worker about themselves. Without the directed framework of the ethnography of speaking, it is doubtful that the *-ing /-in'* distinction would have been explored in detail.

Other insights available through the OEC lens derive from observing not merely what words say, but also what they do. For instance, suffixes, in the case of the lumber workers, and various words and phrases, in Baxter's work, serve more than merely a referential function; they also serve what Hymes (1974) terms a "use" function. In these cases, the deployment of particular words, phrases or suffixes by a group of people situates those individuals within a certain network of interpersonal relationships. These relationships, in turn, yield a sense of group membership which bears significant implications for their functioning in the organization and for their cooperation with other in-group and out-group members.

Hymes (1962) notes that the intent of the EC framework "is heuristic, not *a priori*" (p. 23). The SPEAKING mnemonic is designed to provoke questions about the speech community under study; it functions "not [as] a system to be imposed, but [as] a series of questions to be asked" (p. 25). Thus, the impetus behind the framework itself further encourages its use in generating fresh insights to familiar organizational situations.

In addition to inspiring new ways of thinking about the organizing process in general, the ethnography of communication offers a framework for comparison among

diverse organizations. As noted earlier, Hymes' (1972) overarching goal is "to develop models, or theories, of the interaction of language and social life" (p. 41). These models will be generated from sufficient descriptions of that interaction (ECs) which can be comparatively examined. OECs assist this project by adding to the fund of descriptive studies available for comparison.

Further, the framework of the EC approach allows for cross-organizational comparison's within one country or cross-culturally. Is a particular way of speaking associated with a particular industry? What are the implications for organizational mergers between industries? Do multinational companies operate from a single speech code or numerous local ones? Is there any correlation between the number of speech codes and intra-organizational conflict? Questions such as these could be addressed through organizational ethnographies of communication. Eventually, cross-organizational generalizations concerning the patterns, functions and meanings of speech in organizational settings might be developed.

In addition to providing a new lens for organizational investigation and a framework for cross-organizational comparison, OECs may address some of the traditional concerns of organizational communication research. Specifically, the EC approach offers one strategy for addressing the micro/macro debate (Weick, 1983) common among organizational scholars. OECs begin with the in-depth investigation of a single speech community: ways of speaking, rules of interaction, appropriate communicative conduct are identified through the careful and close observation of

behavior within a single organization (or with two speech communities within one organization, as with Baxter). Yet the EC framework also allows for cross-organizational comparisons yielding macro level results. Thus, the ethnography of speaking strikes a fitting balance between macro and micro approaches to organizations by beginning with detailed ethnographies, grounded in the particulars of a specific speech community (a micro analysis), yet anticipating a broader comparison across speech communities once sufficient data is collected (a macro synthesis).

Pragmatic Benefits of OECs

The benefits to organizational research and theory noted above provide a compelling argument in and of themselves for a sustained interest in pursuing OECs.

While the value of OECs is evident simply in the fresh approach for studying organizations, OECs have the added merit of also offering pragmatic benefits to organizations themselves. The OECs described above, provide some examples of the pragmatic benefits available with this approach. Baxter shows how the ethnography of speaking framework can be used to facilitate understanding between different organizational subgroups. As Baxter is quick to note, understanding is not the panacea for all problems, yet it does provide a solid foundation of meaning from which to address substantive concerns.

This sort of understanding is needed, not only during times of crisis such as the formulation of a policy or the renegotiation of a contract but is also important during the daily and ongoing operations in an organization. How often do plant managers or

company presidents get different subgroups of the organization together for [what we called at 3M, "state of the plant" sessions?] sessions designed to explain the current status and state of the plant and for management to communicate their vision for the future of the plant. In my own experience, production workers were at best, skeptical of the value of these sessions, and at worst viewed them as insincere propaganda and a waste of time. I propose that one of the main reasons for the negative response was that management and production employees operate from different speech codes and thus the jargon, wording, assumptions of the managers are not familiar to or appreciated by production workers. ECs have the potential to reduce the gap between these groups by pointing out the different assumptions, rules, and premises operative in the different groups.

In Carbaugh's work, the focus is not so much on shared meaning between employees since they employ their shared vocabulary in similar ways. In this case, the ethnography of speaking provides an outsider's understanding of internal vocabulary and in so doing, highlights several key issues which may hinder the smooth functioning of the organization. Familiarity with the framework of the EC approach may help mangers to identify terms evidencing areas of concern, such as "the building situation," aiding the managers to identify and potentially address these concerns in a timely manner. For example, an internal performance survey at a manufacturing site of a large corporation repeatedly identified "communication" as a significant concern for employees (D. Cady, personal communication, August 12, 1994). An OEC at this site would provide a methodology not only for revealing the terms, but also for identifying the meanings

associated with the terms and the impact on organizational functioning. Further, EC offers a different frame of reference, enabling managers to view various concerns from multiple perspectives thus increasing the likelihood of arriving at an understanding of subtle and complex concerns.

Finally, Huspek's analysis of lumber worker's speech illustrates how the ethnography of communication can illumine deep structures operating within the organization which affect not only employee productivity, but also, fundamentally effect notions of personal self-worth and value to society. EC offers a heuristic guide for getting at subtle, underlying issues and has the potential to uncover interpersonal concerns previously unarticulated by organizational members.

These three studies illustrate how the ethnography of communication facilitates understanding at several different levels: understanding between conflicting subgroups in single organizations (Baxter), understanding of an outsider about internal norms of communication (Carbaugh), and understanding of the relationships between speech and personal perception of self-worth (Huspek). [14] OECs also offer heuristic advantages by providing exploratory studies which can help to reveal unidentified organizational concerns and to flesh out and explicate poorly understood communicative concerns.

Conclusion

The ethnography of communication, originating just over thirty years ago, remains a relatively young field of study. While most naturalistic studies of organizations employ talk in their investigations, the ethnography of communication is

unique in its focus on the patterns, functions and meanings of speech in the context of organizational interactions. Although its value has become increasingly obvious in anthropology, linguistics and speech communication (as evidenced by numerous studies), adapting the EC approach to organizational communication research is just beginning to be explored.

The studies reviewed here illustrate some of the specific benefits available to the organizations considered in these studies. At the micro level, the ethnography of communication can provide a fresh look at familiar phenomena. Managers, workers, employees of all levels become accustomed to the 'way things are,' forgetting that the 'way things are' is not necessarily the way things need to be. Focusing on language in use (speaking) in a sustained way can bring to light attitudes, relationships or ways of thinking that have long been assumed or taken for granted. As Bauman and Sherzer (1975) note, the formalization of rules, the articulation of ways of speaking is not a goal in and of itself, "rather, formal rules help to systematize description and bring out aspects of the relationship of speaking to social life that would not otherwise be apparent" (p. 111).

The EC approach also has obvious application in multinational companies where interaction between subsidiaries located in different countries may prove bewildering as well as frustrating. Hymes notes that competence in another language requires not only an understanding of the grammatical structures of the language, but an understanding of its appropriate social use as well. OECs can provide this understanding which is

especially important when subsidiaries in other countries are operating from both an ethnic culture and an organizational culture that differ from those in the home office.

Problems and concerns in organizations may arise from unrecognized differences in ways of speaking. OECs provide a methodology for identifying the underlying meanings, values and attitudes associated with different terms and help to illuminate the issues motivating organizational conflict and resulting in poor productivity and less than optimal organizational performance.

In short, the ethnography of communication has great potential for the clarification as well as the solution of various practical social problems. Bauman and Sherzer (1975) state,

> Through awareness of and sensitivity to the socioexpressive dimension of speaking . . . ethnographic investigators are particularly well equipped to clarify those problem situations which stem from covert conflicts between different ways of speaking . . . Understanding of such problem situations is a major step toward their solution, laying the groundwork for planning and change. (Bauman & Sherzer, 1975, p. 115).

As evidenced in this paper, the ethnography of communication holds this same potential for organizational concerns as well.

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Appendix I

OECs and Organizational Communication

Interpretive research, according to Putnam (1983), arises from a diverse conglomeration of philosophical traditions which "share a common core: the centrality of meaning in social actions" (p. 32). In contrast to positivistic schools of thought which tend to treat communication as a tangible substance which flows from one point to another, interpretivists view organizing as an ongoing process and "adopt a meaning-centered view of organizational communication" (Putnam, 1983, p. 40). Some assumptions of each approach, as described by Putnam (1983), are shown in Table 1. OECs fit within the interpretivist versus the functionalist paradigm.

Table 1

Some Assumptions of Functionalist and Interpretivist Approaches

(Adapted from Putnam, 1983)

Functionalist	Interpretivist
Treat social phenomena as concrete materialistic entities: social facts	believe reality is socially constructed
norms, values, roles treated as tangible facts	norms, values, roles treated as artificial creations
social structures exist *prior to* individual actions	social structures *are the result of* individual actions
treat orgs as monolithic entities, as "cooperative systems in pursuit of common goals" (p. 36) and	take a pluralistic perspective and treat orgs as an array of factional groups with diverse purposes
	goals

have an implicit managerial bias	more likely to incorporate various perspectives (mgr. and worker)
communication treated as tangible substance that flows from pt. to pt.	meaning centered view of communication

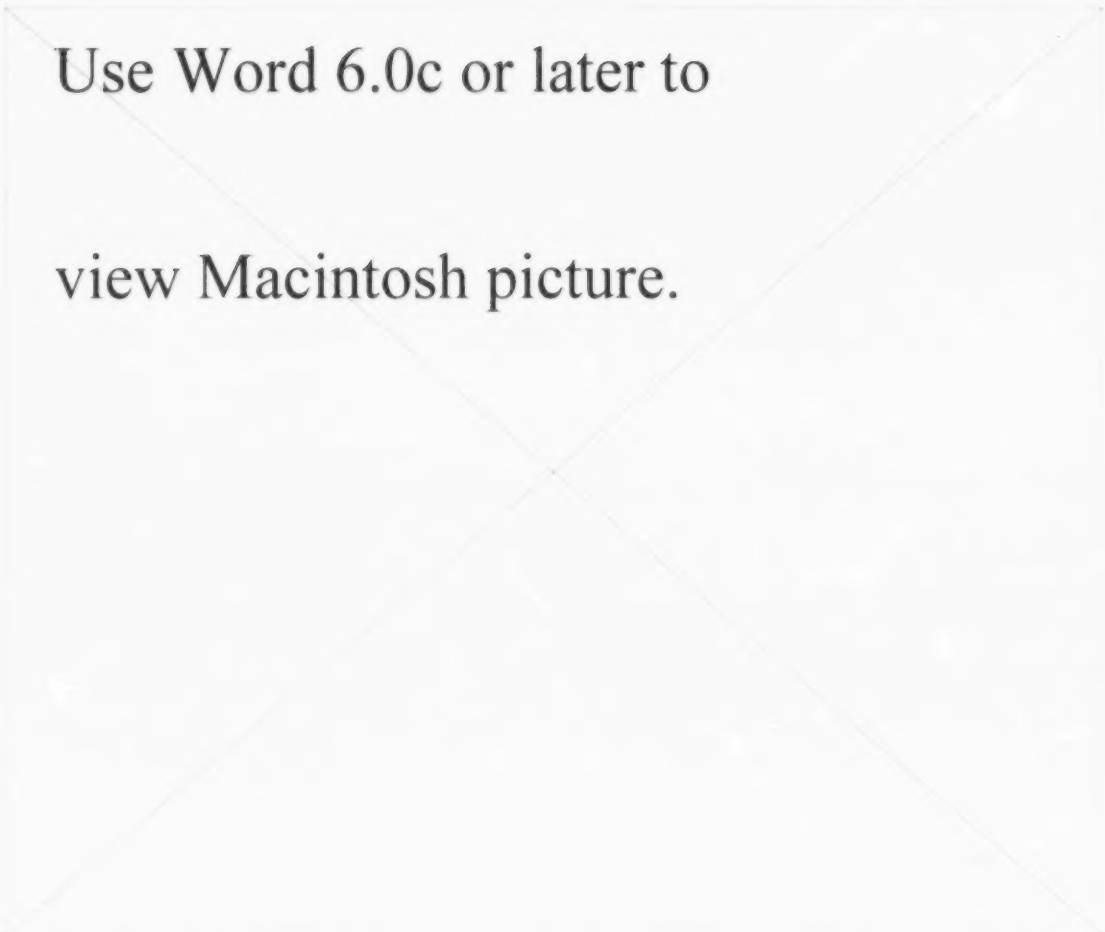
Interpretive work may be further divided into naturalistic and critical camps according to the emphasis placed on initiating social changes. Critical research is often characterized by an evaluative quality in addition to an analytical one; much of the critical work in organizations concentrates on the emancipation of lower-level workers from the presumed domination of more powerful actors. Naturalistic work, on the other hand, pursues knowledge without moral evaluation. Instead of catalyzing social change, naturalistic work, including OECs, employs in-depth description as a means of accurately understanding complex situations or events.

Organizational Culture Literature

Over the past two decades, the concept of "culture" has become increasingly popular across all organizational research paradigms; approaches to the concept have been as diverse as the philosophical traditions from which they arise. Traditional theorists, often working from a managerial perspective, take a more functionalist approach, conceptualizing culture as a tool which can be manipulated to increase productivity. At the other end of the spectrum are scholars who see culture as a metaphor for organizations; culture is something that an organization *is*, not something it *has* .

Smircich and Calas (1987), in their review of the organizational culture literature, identify five themes within these two paradigms. On the functionalist side, the literature may be divided into those studies which treat culture as an external variable, focusing on differences across international boundaries, and those which treat culture as an internal variable, employed by management to improve organizational performance. In the interpretivist paradigm, the literature is divided into three groups, each characterized by a different approach to the concept of culture. For instance, some researchers regard culture as "knowledge structures," others as "patterns of discourse" and still others as "a reflection of mind's unconscious operations" (p. 239).

The ethnography of communication views culture as "patterns of discourse" (p. 241) and falls within what Smircich and Calas (1987) call the "organizational symbolism" approach. Originating in anthropology and often based on the work of Clifford Geertz (1973), this approach treats cultures as "systems of shared symbols and meanings," premises and rules; it works to interpret and describe the "understandings that underlie cultural activity" by linking meaning to actions (p. 241). See Table 2 for an outline of the location of the ethnography of communication within organizational communication research.



OECs and the Culture Literature

Two of the three OECs treated in this paper, (Baxter and Carbaugh) specifically locate their work within the organizational culture literature and all three studies evidence an "organizational symbolism" approach to research. At the same time, the findings of OECs have implications beyond the confines of the "culture" perspective and the EC approach offers methodological insight for several aspects of organizational communication research. Thus, the contrasting cases were not limited to articles focusing

on organizational culture, but instead were expanded to include a variety of naturalistic interpretive work in organizations.

Table 1
Comparative Overview of OECs

	Baxter	Carbaugh	Huspek
Organization	Academic Institution	TV Station	Lumber yard
Analytical Approach			
boundaries of speech community	two speech communities within one organization	one speech community (three people types)	one speech community (two linguistic forms)
unit of analysis	phrases: "talking things through" vs. "putting it in writing"	words: "movers" vs. "paper movers"	suffixes: *ing* vs. *in'*
Methods			
role of researcher	current and full-fledged member of speech communities	outsider: participant observer and interviewer	former member current interviewer
data collection	written field notes, informal conversations, written material, experience as a faculty member and administrative worker	audio-taped interviews, written material, field notes	audio-taped interviews, experience in plant
type of data	qualitative	qualitative	quantitative and qualitative
Format of Results	explicate two communicative codes	identify five dimensions of three people types	articulate seven rules for linguistic choice of -ing vs. -in'

Endnotes

[1] ECs constitute one valuable way of investigating organizational culture which have not been fully explored to date. It is not my desire to critique other organizational research methods, but simply to explore the unique benefits of the ethnography of communication.

[2] A speech community is any group of people that share not only a common language, but also share the social norms for appropriate interaction.

[3] These are the only OECs of which I am aware. In an effort to uncover additional OECs, I conversed with several individuals familiar with the EC literature and reviewed the past fifteen years of four journals (Language and Society, Management Communication Quarterly, Research on Language and Social Interaction, and Administrative Science Quarterly). Carbaugh (1988) suggests some case studies (Gordon, 1983; Tway, 1975; and Gronn & Manning, 1982) which "attend to speech-in-action in a sustained and intensive way" (p. 237), but these do not fit the criteria for OECs established in the criteria section of this paper.

[4] Other terms, "etic" and "emic," have also been used to describe the outsider versus insider perspectives. Hymes holds that an etic account serves a useful purpose as a preliminary grid or framework for observation, but that an emic account is necessary for research validity (Hymes, 1974a, p. 11).

[5] A common understanding of the meanings associated with particular terms can also define a speech community, as will be seen in Baxter's study of an academic institution. While a single language may be shared by all organizational members, variant usage of shared terms (by different organizational subgroups) may indicate the presence of different speech communities within one organization.

[6] While speech acts may comprise a speech event or situation all by themselves, more often there will be a difference in magnitude among the three units. An example might be: a party (speech situation), a conversation during the party (speech event), a joke within the conversation (speech act) (Hymes, 1972).

[7] Each criterion is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for identification as an EC. Most qualitative naturalistic studies meet some of these criteria; ECs meet all of them.

[8] Hymes (1974b) uses the terms "stylistc" or "social" to describe the dimension of contrast in language which is distinct from the referential dimension. Huspek (1986) suggests the mjore inclusive term "social-stylistic" to describe this dimension while noting that social influences are also present in referential meanings (p. 160).

[9] For example, the bank attempted to frame a teller's comments concerning other services in the bank as "helping a customer;" thus framing sales as customer service.

[10] These two criteria fit together and both may be illustrated in Starbuck's article; thus, both criteria are discussed together.

[11] Data was collected during numerous open-ended interviews with Wachtell's lawyers, associates, clients and partners.

[12] An example of a rule is "In adjective constructions, if the adjective is a swear word, then the *ing* variant is prohibited."

[13] See Huspek and Kendal, 1991 for a discussion of tensions between management and workers in the lumber mill.

[14] It should be noted that the EC approach will usually be more appropriate for exploratory studies than for addressing specific topics such as superior/subordinate communication, leadership style etc. The ideal of the framework -- not a system to be imposed, but a series of questions to be asked -- makes the ethnography of speaking, by nature, open-ended and inquisitive. It has no specific topic other than speaking as an activity in its own right. Since ways of speaking permeate every aspect of work life, the EC approach may provide insight into virtually any area; but these applications will not necessarily be evident prior to the study.